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ABSTRACT

Parents today are tagged as a generation preoccupied with work and themselves but at the same time overly focused on their children. This book attempts to explain this paradox. It explores the ways in which social, cultural, and psychological changes have come together with a new definition of the child to create a situation in which parenthood carries the risk of spoiling childhood. Some of that risk is of parents' own making; some is socially imposed. The book contains 10 chapters. Chapter 1, "The Perils of Parenting," discusses how the concepts of parenting and childhood are changing. Chapter 2, "Your Majesty, the Baby," discusses parents' overvaluation of their children. Balancing parent's needs against the baby's needs is discussed in chapter 3, "And Baby Makes Three, or Is Baby Me." Chapter 4, "Parenting by Guilt," explores the guilt-driven pendulum swing between parenting too little and parenting too much. The issue of parents' pressuring their children to achieve and ways that parents can facilitate a healthy integration of productivity and creativity for their children are discussed in chapter 5, "My Toddler, the Doctor," and in chapter 6, "Pampering Our Children toward Success." Chapter 7, "Parents Bartering for Love," suggests that parents place demands on their children as well as grant them, and garner respect as well as giving it. Discipline is discussed in chapter 8, "Use the Rod, Lose the Child," including limit setting and enforcement of consequences. Chapter 9, "The Kinderdult," discusses the concept of the child as half miniature adult and half cherub. The final chapter, "Unspoiling Childhood," discusses many of the points raised earlier in the book and concludes that to be good parents we must give generously of ourselves but never give ourselves over to our children. The book contains a Notes section organized by chapter. (LPP)

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